THE ZOO STORY

EXISTENSIALISM

* The Theatre of the Absurd aims to create a ritual-like, mythological, archetypal, allegorical vision, closely related to the world of dreams. The focal point of these dreams is often man's fundamental bewilderment and confusion, stemming from the fact that he has no answers to the basic **existential** questions:
* why we are alive
* why we have to die
* why there is injustice and suffering.
* Some critics consider Albee’s plays as a severe satire against American society to show people how they are and what their time is like in the hope that perhaps they’ll change it. Like the Absurdists, he believes that man has lost his faith in everything, yet there is some hope in Albee’s, in man’s ability to face his true condition and thus his salvation.

Themes*:*

The Zoo Story is Albee's first masterpiece and the beginning of his great career as a dramatist.

THEMES

illusion and Reality in modern society

isolation of human existence in a world without God,

lack of communication between individuals

recurring theme of repetition.

human isolation

loneliness

class differences

dangers of inaction within American society.

The first theme that appears in the play is repetition, one that recurs over and over in the play, with Jerry’s phrase ³I’ve been to the zoo´ that is repeated three times in the first page. This indicates from the very first beginning the techniques Albee will be using to escalate actions.

Peter stands for the average successful American. He leads a comfortable life in the better side of New York. He has a wife, two daughters, two cats, two television sets and two parakeets.

On the other hand, Jerry’s appearance indicates his disillusion in life. He lives on the other side of the city and of the society.

Jerry’s possessions look pathetic compared to those of Peter’s. They belong to two different worlds.

The theme of isolation marks both characters Peter never likes the idea of paying attention to any other thing rather than his book and bench.

Jerry lives in a place where every room is an isolated island.The only interaction he ever mentioned with his neighbours is not of a social nature, but rather of an offender’s. This lack of communication is a dominating theme in the play. The lack of communication between Peter and Jerry, Jerry and his neighbours, and even Jerry and the dog. The story of Jerry and the dog is a clear image of what he meant by the reality zoo. The dog used to attack him and bite him in his way to stairs. That is the only way they used to communicate and that is the same way Peter answered Jerry at the beginning

Jerry succeeded in building some sort of contact with Peter and open his eyes to the artificiality of his life. Jerry and Peter are representatives of real human beings. Eventually, Peter discovers that the zoo is nothing but the world they live in, in which people live like animals, isolated and unwilling to face their true conditions. Albee wanted to attract our attention in his absurdist style to what is behind the masked lives we lead, to some of the bad traits we cannot identify in ourselves in this modern world, namely; isolation of human beings and lack of communication or even unwillingness; of the illusions that block our mind’s eyes from seeing the true life and our condition on it. He is trying to move us into a better society in a way one wouldn’t reject, a way that’s not harsh to listen yet a fact that’s hard to know so that we can do something about it.